



ISSUE 5

\$1.25 CAN. \$1.50
U.K. 70p

imagine

LETTERS

1 March 1979
Oakland, CA

Big changes this time around.

The most obvious, of course, is our size; we've moved out of the standard comic dimensions up to magazine size. Our hope is to make our stories more graphically powerful by their presentation in this larger format.

Also, you'll note the removal of color stories. We had just too many production and printing problems (which have caused financial problems as well) to continue as we'd been going. Our intention is to continue to produce color material in some form or another (the current thought is to issue an occasional all-color special, like the CODY STARBUCK and PARSIFAL books), but we suspect it'll be a bit before we find a better system of production than we've had in the last year. We'll keep you informed.

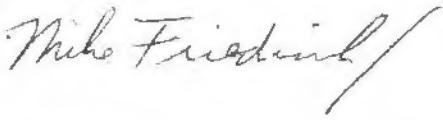
Naturally our price has been reduced, too, which should make many of you happy. Please note that our subscription price has changed (see the small print below); those of you who ordered subscriptions at the old price will have your subscription adjusted.

We're now issuing a "Star*Reach Letter" every two or three months which keeps you abreast on the latest news here, plus some profiles on our contributors. Send six self-addressed stamped envelopes here in order to get on the mailing list.

This issue spotlights Michael Gilbert, who's drawn this issue's cover and the conclusion to his story "A Dream of Milk and Honey." Mike is one of our most interesting and entertaining contributors and I'm very pleased to have him in these pages. Michael is 27 years old, residing in the suburban outskirts of San Francisco, coming here a few years back from New York. His first comics work was published in 1970 and he's been working steadily at it for the last three years or so. Besides his acclaimed "Wraith" strip in QUACK and his contributions here in IMAGINE and STAR*REACH, he's published three issues of "New Paltz Comics" (under various subtitles), plus had experience with political cartooning and tv graphics. He cites as influences "Eisner, Ditko, Krigstein and the EC boys." In "A Dream of Milk and Honey" Michael says he's trying to establish a more human side of religion and spiritualism: "humanity is missing in most of the comics stories today."

Also in this issue is a new contributor, Paul Kirchner. Paul's 26, a resident of Connecticut, a contributor to HIGH TIMES, HEAVY METAL, DC, Marvel, and various magazine and newspaper illustrations. His American work has been regularly reprinted in the French magazine L'ECHEO DES SAVANES. I rather enjoy his story here and hope to be able to print more of his work.

See you next time.



"A Dream of Milk and Honey" is lovingly dedicated to Ms. Sonda Walsh, whose support, research assistance and expert editorial advice have made vast positive contributions to this story . . . and its author. A special thanks also to Mary McAllister Gordon for lettering excellence above and beyond the call of duty. You too, Al!

Michael Gilbert

Dear Mr. Michael Gilbert,

Congratulations!

Your story "A Dream of Milk and Honey" is most of all an example of the kind of innovation and strive that is moving sequential art (or graphic literature) out of the primordial swamps in which comic books have so long wallowed.

It is most reassuring to know there are people like you and Art Spiegelman who are also laboring to deal with themes beyond cops and robbers. More important you are giving credibility to the belief that this art form is capable of so much more than any of us have ever attempted. I applaud the power of your effort, the courage of your writing and the inventiveness of your presentation. I urge you to continue in this direction. We shall, all of us who are in this field, be richer for what you are doing.

I have but one major critique: In future efforts I hope you will attempt a more disciplined ratio between art and text. I feel that the text in some areas overwhelms the art and in some areas the art obscures the text. There should be, I believe, a very carefully orchestrated balance between the two.

Cordially,
Will Eisner

Dear Mike:

I am not sure that you will be receiving much mail on IMAGINE #4. Mediocrity is hard to make comment on.

Over all, the art is very good to excellent, but most of the stories lack depth, or true inspiration on the part of the reader.

The worst faring story has to be "A Dream of Milk and Honey." The art ranged from good to okay or, on a scale of 1-10, a 7 to 4. From Gilbert's other work, I wonder if his ego gets in the way of his work? The story seems to be heading for a message, but I want to be entertained, not preached to. I will reserve judgment until next issue, although this cut story makes me wonder if a quarterly publication should ask its readers to wait on installments.

The best story overall is "The Awakening of Tamaki." Adequate art sets well with this simple, though provoking story. Lee seemed to have left the end of the story open for a sequel, which I do not see as deserving from the structure of this 12 page story.

"Cosmix" seems to have a personal joke running through the stylized art. This is okay with me because the joke seems to translate semi-well.

The most disappointing piece has to be "The Summoning." Steve's art is typical Ditko which is great. But the color is typical Marvel, nothing inspired. Maybe Steve's art does not handle color in the mood of Marie Severin well, and the story, No truth. "Is," is dead after the first page, our unnamed Gentleman, maybe nameless but not anonymous, and what is the point? Selfishness for one's own means seems to be the strongest point, but that falls very very short as a recognizable entity in the story.

It all boiled down to nice art work mixed with a truckload of words that gave nothing to the story.

\$1.75 had me thinking twice before I bought IMAGINE #4, but Steve's cover pulled me over. I may, however, be taking the time to look closely at #5 before purchase at the buck seventy-five price.

Now to get picky. In your editorial; "no" instead of "now," is probably your Freudian slip, as in answer to so many requests for subscriptions in the past. "Anticipation" was in IMAGINE #1, Michael Gilbert has done three stories for IMAGINE. "Encounters at the Crazy Cat Saloon" in IMAGINE #2. "Fear of Death!" plus "Vignette: A Soft and Gentle Rain," in IMAGINE #3.

All the best,
Mike Hansen
975 Wing Place
Stanford, CA 94305

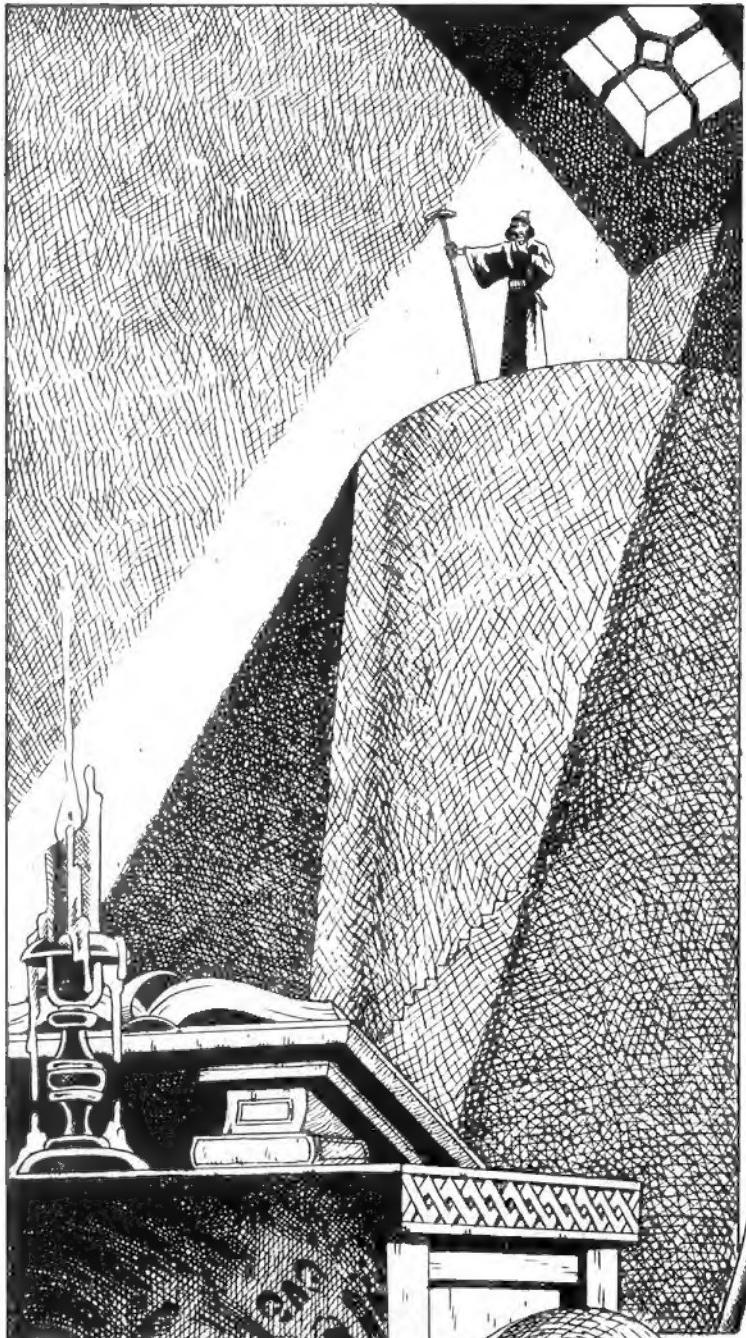
IMAGINE #5 (April, 1979) is published 4 times a year by Star*Reach Productions, P.O. Box 2328, Berkeley, CA 94702; Mike Friedrich, editor and publisher. ©Copyright 1979 Star*Reach Productions. World Rights Reserved. Front cover art and the story "A Dream of Milk and Honey" ©1979 Michael T. Gilbert. "A Sprig of Thaxin" ©1979 Paul Kirchner. "Ravens" ©1974, 1979 Two-Man-Horse. Address all inquiries c/o Star*Reach Productions.

Contributions are not encouraged, though eventually read; warning: no return postage and it'll be trashed.

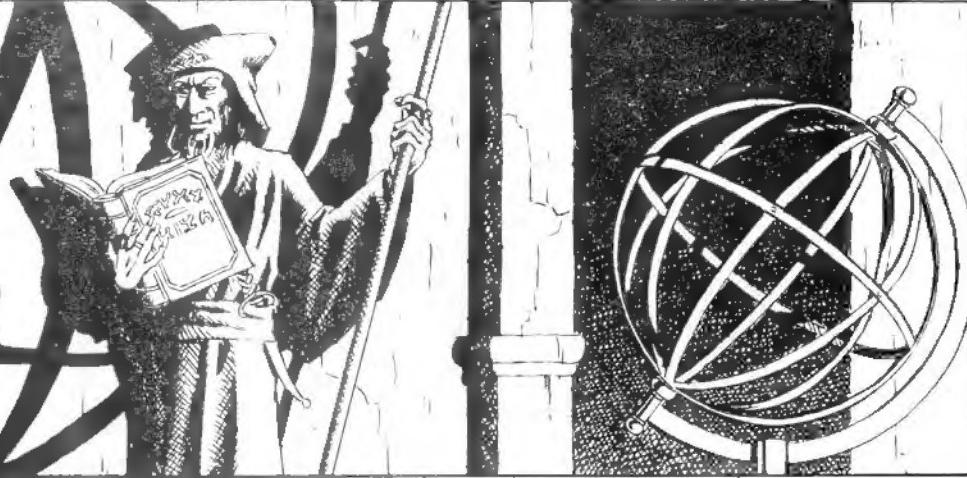
FIRST PRINT: April, 1979

ADDITIONAL COPIES: \$1.25 plus 40¢ postage/handling (mailed flat, 1st Class).

SUBSCRIPTIONS: 4 issues for \$6.00 (foreign: \$7.00 in U.S. funds). Available from SUPERGRAPHICS, Box 6381, Wyomissing, PA 19610



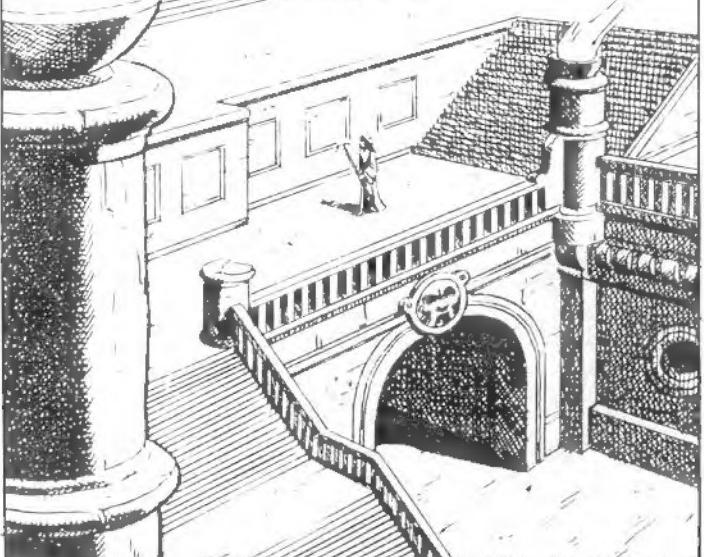
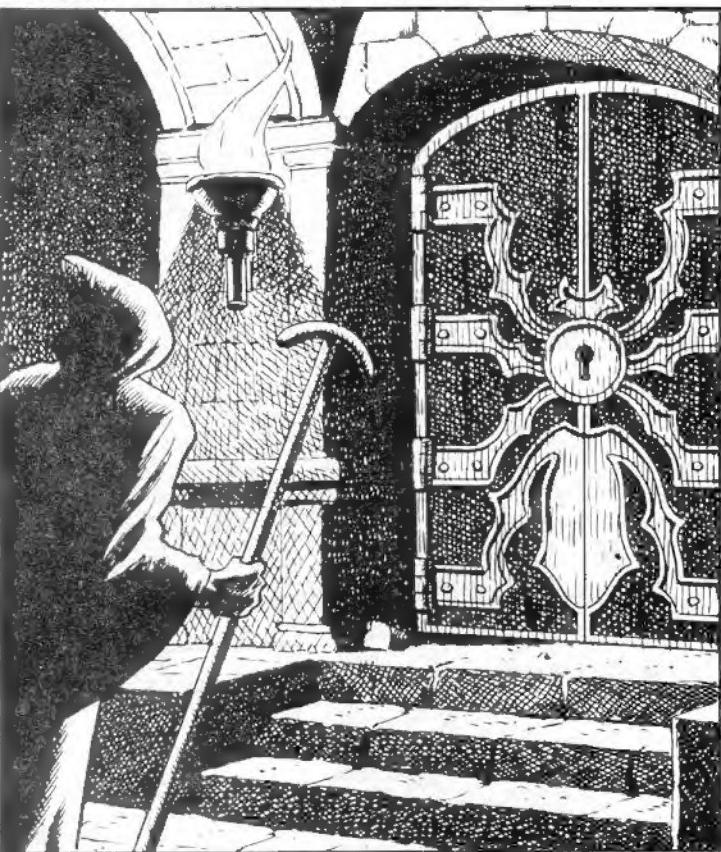
"THE THAXIN BUSH! IT BLOSSOMS ONLY ONCE IN A HUNDRED YEARS... AND THE TIME IS NEAR! HOW I'VE WAITED... FOR ONE NEED MERELY BREATHE THE SCENT OF ITS FLOWER TO LIVE FOREVER!"



"WITHOUT IT, MY DAYS GROW EVER SHORTER AND MY SPELLS EVER WEAKER..."



"YET THERE IS BUT ONE BUSH LEFT LIVING... AND THAT GROWS SOMEWHERE DEEP IN THE NORTHERN WASTES! THE NORTHERN WASTES... NO MAN WOULD DARE ENTER THAT DREADED LAND... NO MAN COULD RETURN ALIVE..."



"ONLY A DEMON COULD DO IT!"



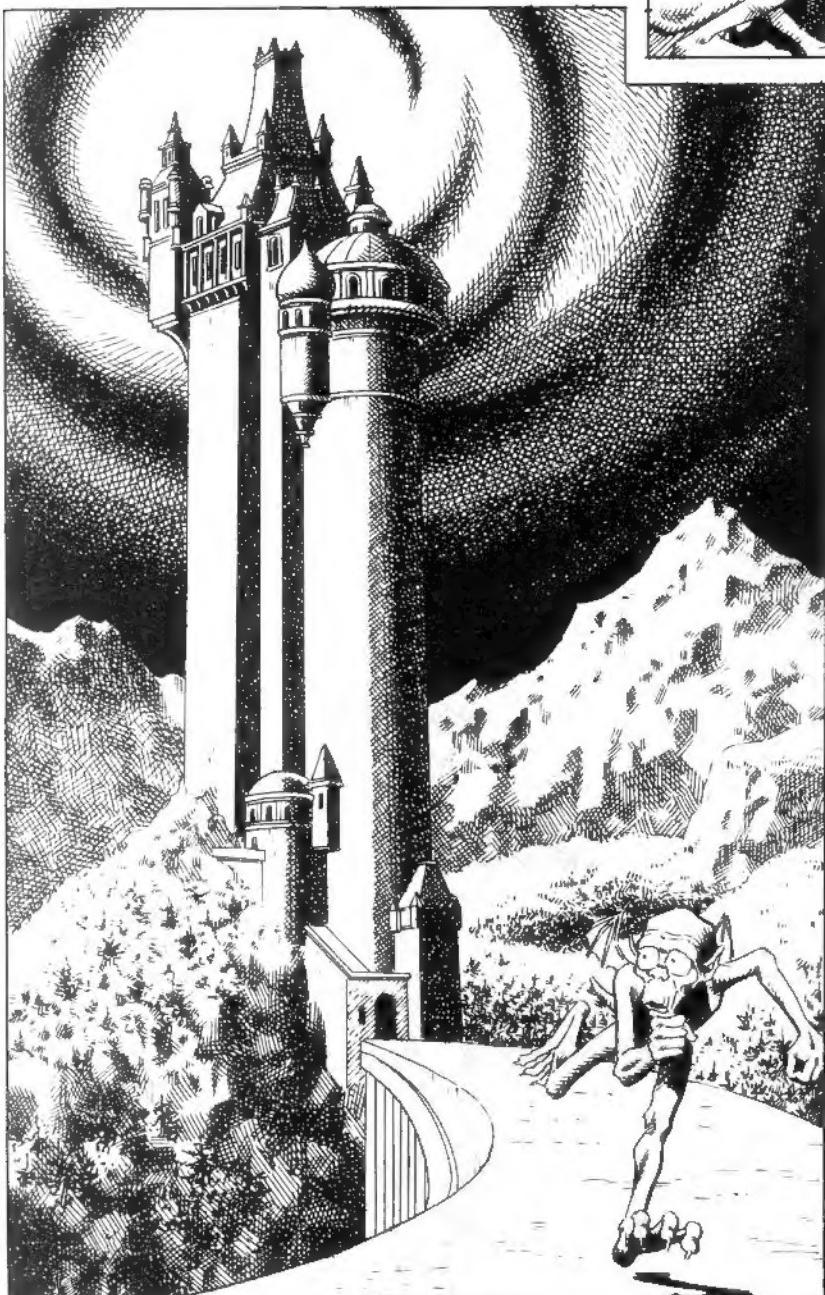
IN A CHAMBER DEEP IN THE BOWELS OF HIS CASTLE, THE WIZARD RAISES THE LID OF A FIERY WELL...

SPIRITS OF THE PIT, I SUMMON THEE!

I REQUIRE A SOLDIER FROM YOUR ARMY OF DARKNESS ... SEND FORTH A DEMON TO SERVE ME!

MY POWERS HAVE INDEED WANED...

AT THE DOOR OF THE CASTLE, THE WIZARD CHARGED THE DEMON (ECK, BY NAME) WITH HIS MISSION...



FOR MONTHS ECK TRAVELED THE ROAD NORTH... PAST THE CITIES AND FARMS OF MEN, PAST THEIR TENDED FIELDS AND PASTURES. THE ROAD FINALLY ENDED AT THE EDGE OF A GLOOMY FOREST. RESOLUTELY, ECK PRESSSED ON...



PASSAGE WAS SLOW AND DIFFICULT THROUGH THE THICK GROWTH OF THE FOREST... TREES BLOCKED HIS EVERY TURN AND ROOTS TRIPPED HIS EVERY STEP...



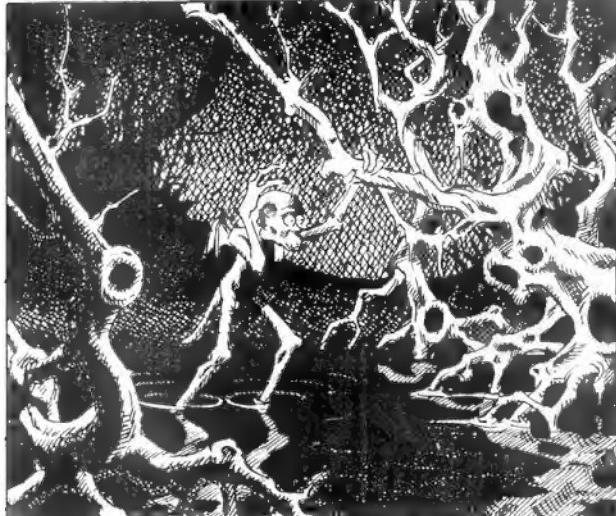
ECK SPENT HIS NIGHTS HIDING FROM THE NOCTURNAL PROWLERS WHOSE HOOTS AND HOWLS RENT THE DARKNESS...



ECK SETTLED INTO A PEACEFUL SLEEP.



THE FOREST GRADUALLY THINNED OUT, AND THE GROUND GREW DAMP UNDER ECK'S FEET.. SOON HE FOUND HIMSELF ANKLE DEEP IN THE SLIME OF A GREAT SWAMP. THE AIR STANK OF DECAY AND HUMMED WITH CLOUDS OF INSECTS.



AS NIGHT FELL, ECK SPOTTED A CAMPFIRE IN THE DISTANCE. IT WAS THE ONLY SIGN OF LIFE HE HAD SEEN THUS FAR, AND ONE THAT PROMISED WARMTH, CHEER, AND COMPANIONSHIP. HE MADE HIS WAY TOWARD IT.



ECK TURNED AND
RAN AS THE OGRE
MADE A GRAB FOR
HIM.



ONLY HIS SPEED
DELIVERED ECK
FROM THE OGRE'S
GRASP...



OR MOST OF
HIM, ANYWAY.



AT LAST ECK REACHED THE
EDGE OF THE SWAMP...
BEFORE HIM STOOD THE
MOUNTAINS THAT BORDERED
THE NORTHERN WASTES.



THE MOUNTAINS WERE STEEP,
AND OFFERED LITTLE HOLD TO
HAND OR FOOT...



EACH SUCCESSIVE
SUMMIT ONLY RE-
VEALED TO ECK
HOW MUCH FURTHER
HE HAD YET TO GO.

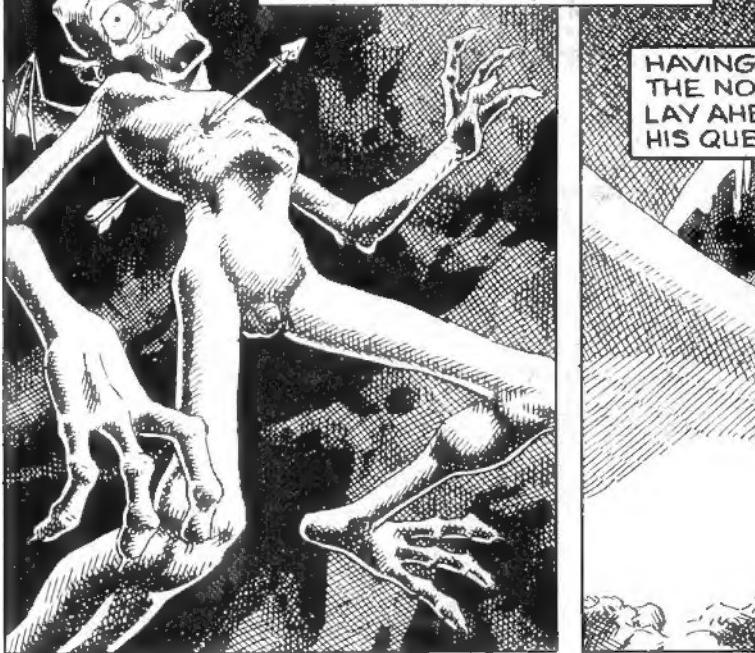




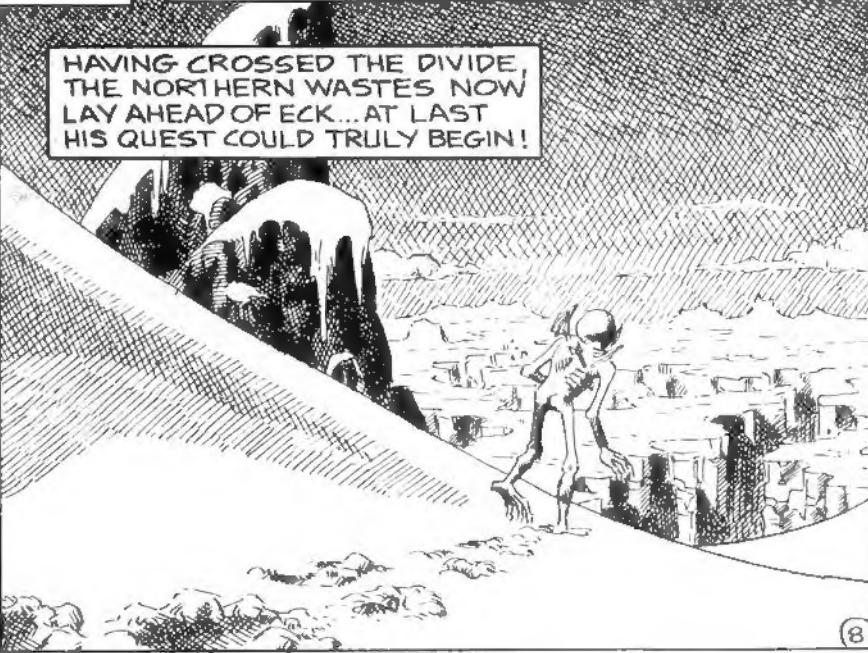
THE PASS WAS WATCHED BY KHBÜRR TRIBESMEN, FIERCE WARRIOR WHO EXACTED TRIBUTE FROM THE OCCASIONAL WAYFARER... ONE SUCH AS ECK WAS OF LITTLE INTEREST TO THEM, BEING TOO POOR TO ROB AND TOO UGLY TO RAPE...



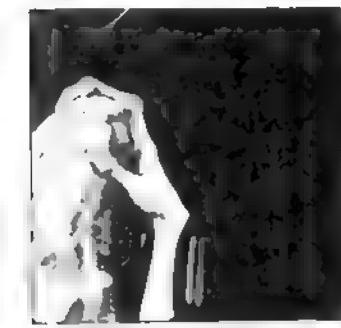
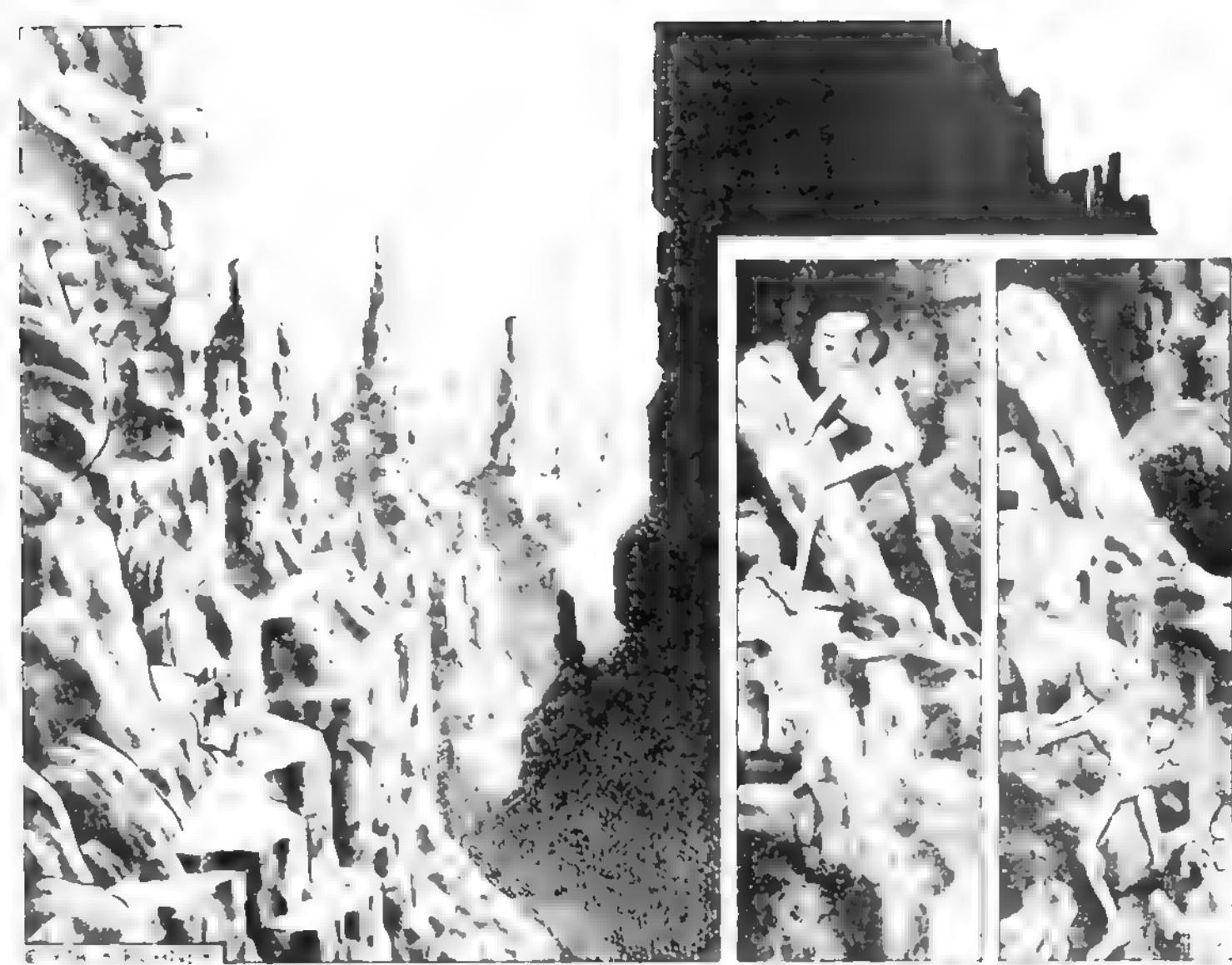
FOR WEEKS ECK CLIMBED, TRUDGING ON AS IT GREW COLDER AND COLDER. HE DARED NOT STOP TO REST, EVEN MOMENTARILY, FOR FEAR OF BEING BURIED BY THE EVER FALLING SNOW... NUMB AND EXHAUSTED, HE REACHED THE PASS.



THEY USED HIM FOR A BIT OF TARGET PRACTISE... ONE OF THEM WAS AN EXCELLENT SHOT, THOUGH THE WOUND WAS NOT FATAL.

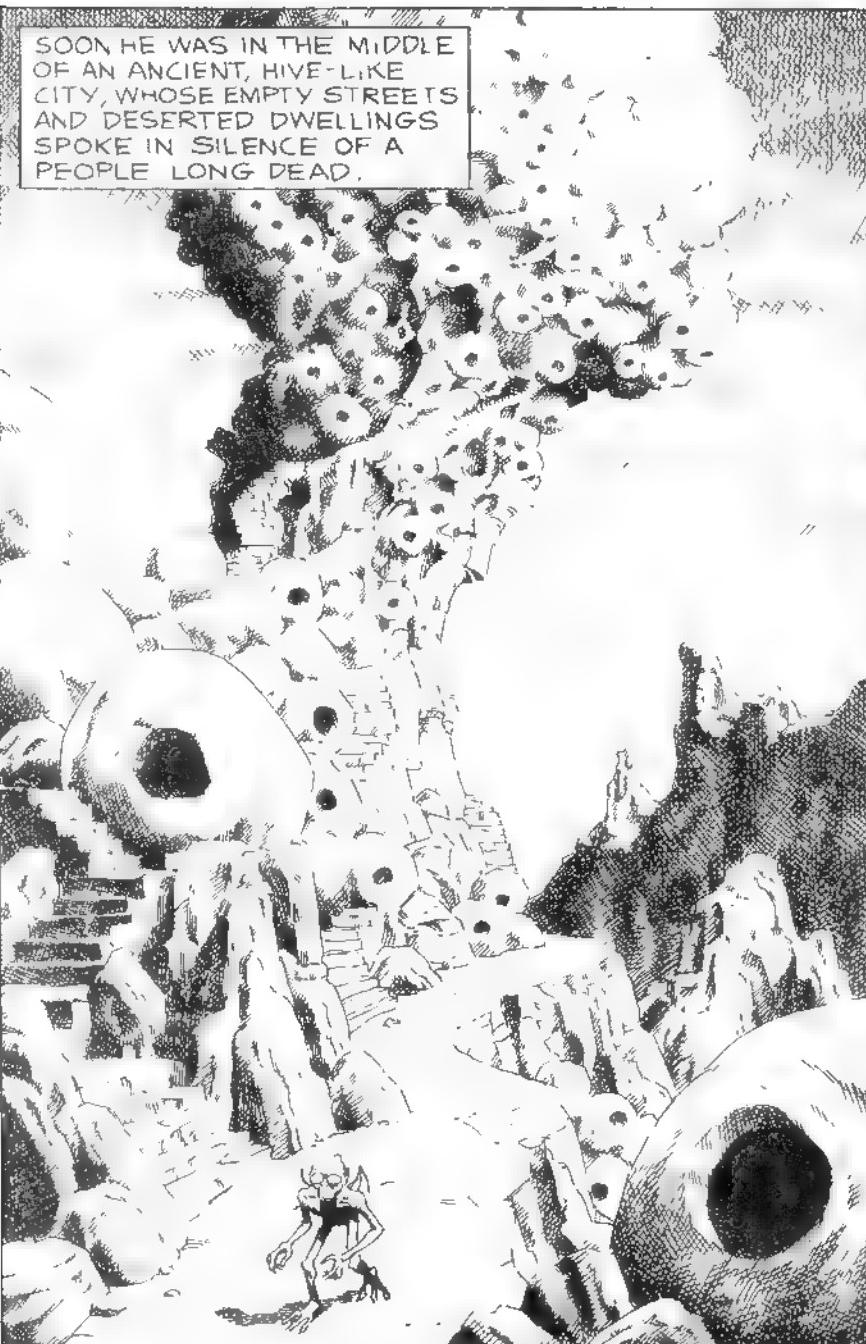


HAVING CROSSED THE DIVIDE, THE NORTHERN WASTES NOW LAY AHEAD OF ECK... AT LAST HIS QUEST COULD TRULY BEGIN!





IN THE WALLS OF THE CANYON,
ECK BEGAN NOTICING STRANGE
STRUCTURES CARVED FROM
THE SOFT SANDSTONE.



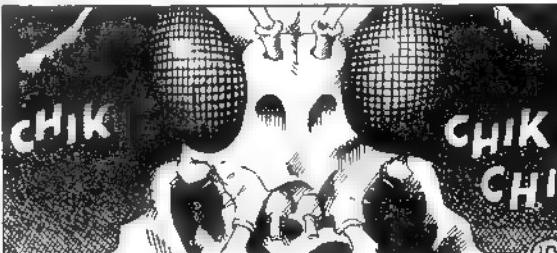
SOON HE WAS IN THE MIDDLE
OF AN ANCIENT, HIVE-LIKE
CITY, WHOSE EMPTY STREETS
AND DESERTED DWELLINGS
SPOKE IN SILENCE OF A
PEOPLE LONG DEAD.



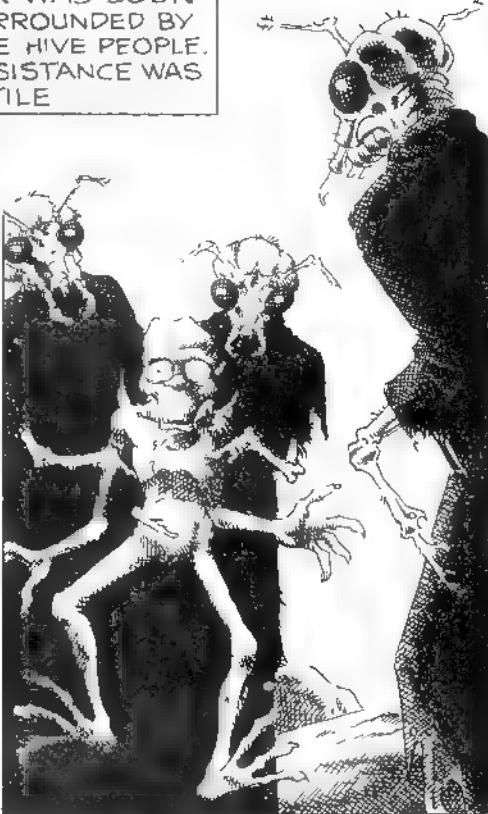
THE UTTER STILLNESS
BORE DOWN ON ECK
LIKE A VAST WEIGHT
NEVER HAD HE FELT
SO ALONE.



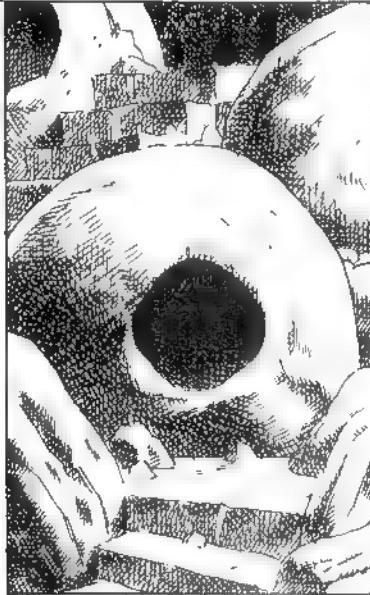
ALTHOUGH, OF COURSE, HE WAS NOT ALONE



ECK WAS SOON SURROUNDED BY THE HIVE PEOPLE. RESISTANCE WAS FUTILE



THEY TOOK HIM TO A SMALL CELL WHERE HE WAS HELD FOR SEVERAL MONTHS ALTHOUGH THE HIVE PEOPLE SEEMED A PRIMITIVE RACE, THE EXPERIMENTS THEY CONDUCTED UPON ECK WERE SURPRISINGLY INGENIOUS ..



AS ECK WANDERED THE GREAT WASTES HE SUSPECTED HE WAS LOST... BUT IT DIDN'T SEEM IMPORTANT SINCE HE DIDN'T KNOW WHERE HE WAS GOING. HE SAW NO SIGN OF THE THAXIN BUSH, NOR OF ANY LIFE OF ANY KIND..



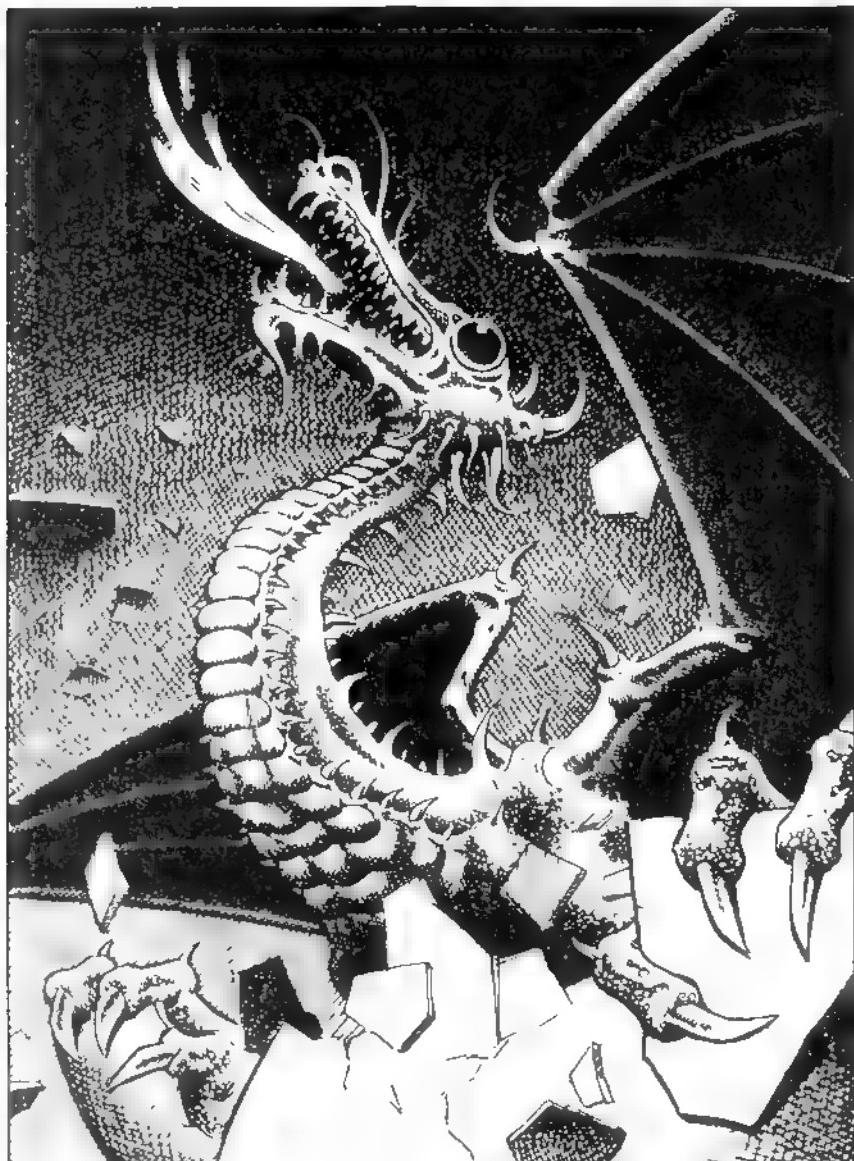
UPON HIS RELEASE HE CONTINUED HIS QUEST



WEEKS UNDER THE
RELENTLESS DESERT
SUN TOOK THEIR TOLL
ON ECK. HIS MISSION
ONLY A DIM RECOLL-
ECTION IN HIS HEAT-
ADDLED BRAIN, STILL
HE CRAWLED, EVER
ONWARD...



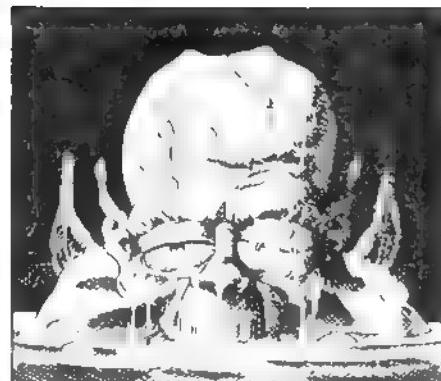
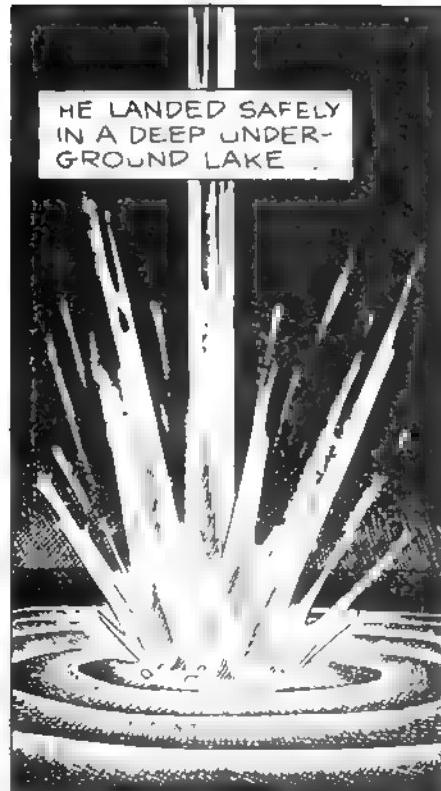
HIS PASSAGE WAS
MARKED ONLY BY
THE DUST HE RAIS-
ED AND THE CRACKS
HE MADE IN AN
ANCIENT EGG...



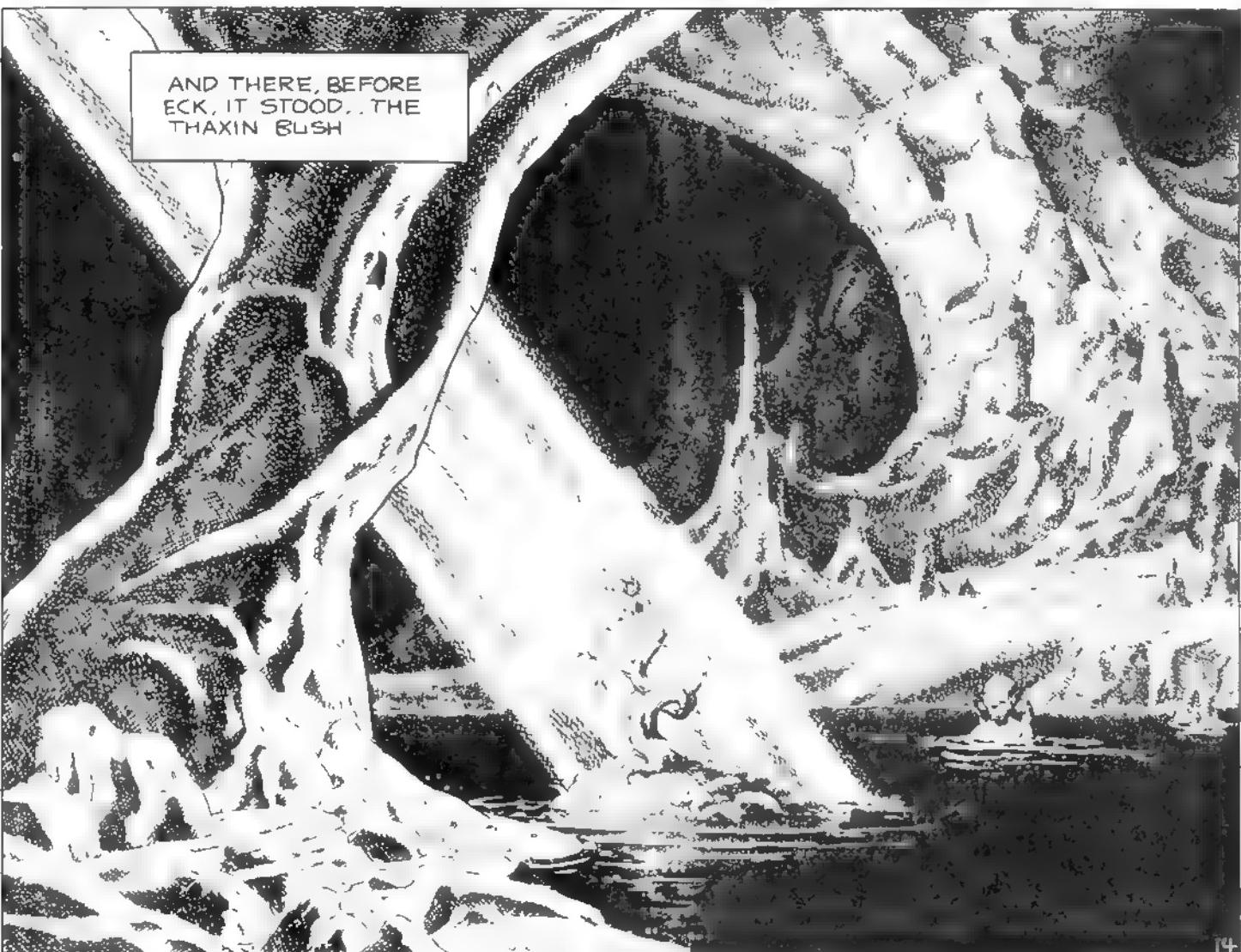
AT AN ALTITUDE OF
7,000 FEET, ECK'S
SHOULDER SUDDENLY
GAVE OUT...



AS IT HAPPENED, HE DID NOT HIT SOLID GROUND, BUT CRASHED THROUGH THE ROOF OF A HUGE CAVERN, WITH THE LOSS OF ONLY HIS LEGS AND PELVIS.

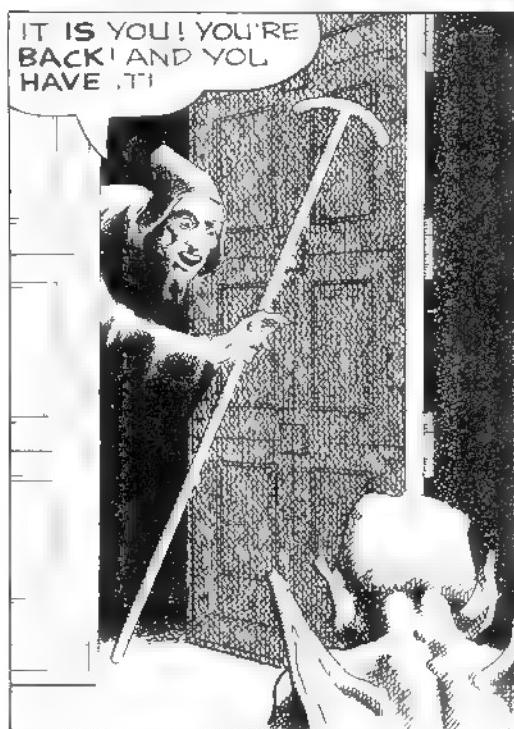
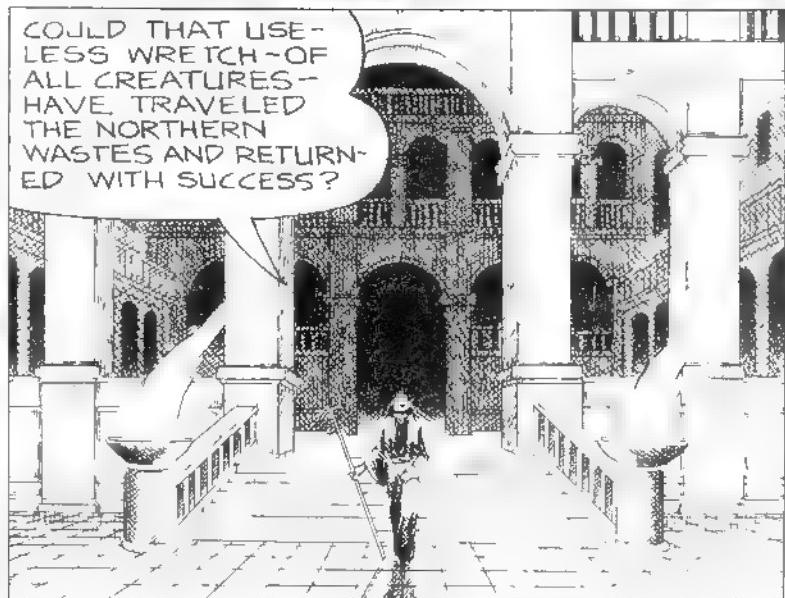
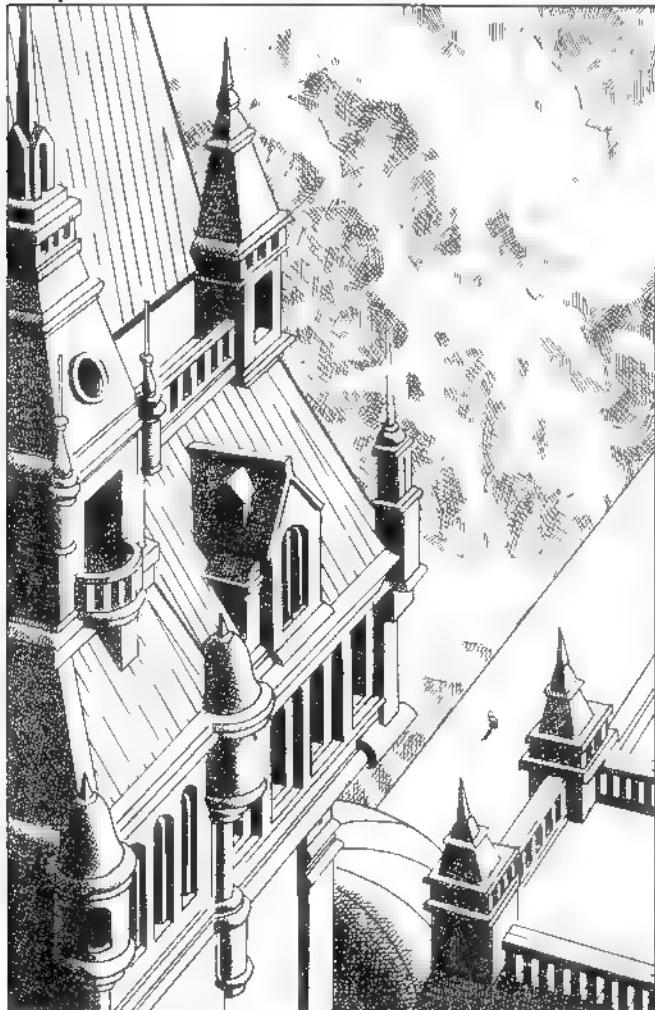


AND THERE, BEFORE ECK, IT STOOD.. THE THAXIN BUSH





THREE YEARS LATER A SMALL FIGURE SLOWLY APPROACHED THE WIZARD'S CASTLE.



I CAN FEEL IT -
THE POWER - THE
STRENGTH - COUR-
SING THROUGH
ME LIKE NEW
BLOOD! I'M
IMMORTAL!



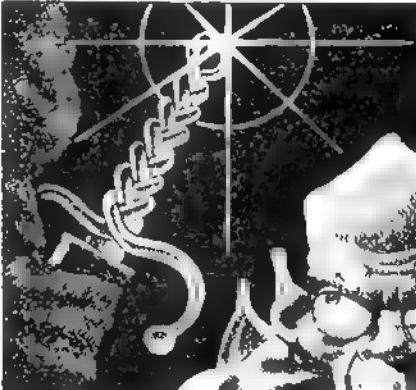
WITH ONE FLUID MOTION ECK PULL-
ED THE KNIFE FROM ITS SHEATH
AND SLICED THE WIZARD'S LEGS
OUT FROM UNDER HIM ..



"HOW I'VE SUFFERED FOR THIS
MOMENT. THE YEARS OF
STUDY...THE YEARS OF WAIT-
ING...BUT NOW, AT LAST, IT'S
MINE .. ETERNAL LIFE!"



"WITH TIME NOW MY ALLY,
NOT MY ENEMY, NOTHING
CAN STOP ME. NO ONE CAN
STAND IN MY WAY!"



AGAIN AND AGAIN
ECK BROUGHT
DOWN THE
BLADE
SAVAGELY, BUT
WITH UNERRING
PRECISION .



AND THEN
HE LEFT.



END

TWENTY FIVE LONG YEARS HAD GONE BY SINCE THE FINAL HOLOCAUST... AND THE NUCLEAR INCINERATION OF "OLD ISRAEL". ALMOST TWO YEARS HAD PASSED SINCE OUR SHIP'S JOURNEY TO THE PROMISED LAND OF "NEW ISRAEL" WAS VIOLENTLY ABORTED ALONE AMONG THE SURVIVORS, ONLY SARAH AND I REMAINED—THE REST HAVING FALLEN VICTIM TO THIS PLANET AND ITS SAVAGE POPULACE. AND NOW... TRAPPED ON THIS DEADLY WORLD... SARAH WAS TO HAVE A BABY. WE DID NOT DESPAIR. WE HAD EACH OTHER, AND A DREAM.

CONCLUSION

A Dream of Milk & Honey

© 1979 michael t. GILBERT 30

CALLIGRAPHY BY MARY E M GORDON



THE NIGHT WAS CALM & SILENT—PERFECT FOR CLEARING THE MIND. I CONTINUED ON IN THE DIRECTION OF THE CEMETERY, LEAVING THE WARM SHELTER OF OUR HOMESITE IN THE DISTANCE. HOW STRANGE MY FATE! AS A YOUNG MAN, MY FIRST WIFE, ANNA, HAD BEEN BARREN. AND NOW I HAD TO SMILE. SMALL WONDER SARAH FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO TELL ME TO BE A FATHER—AT MY AGE! RIDICULOUS BUT WHO CAN ARGUE WITH WHAT'S?

"OH, I WAS WILLING TO ACCEPT FATE'S LITTLE JOKE WITH A SMILE. STILL, I WASN'T OBLIVIOUS TO THE FACT THAT UNLESS A RESCUE SHIP TOOK US TO NEW ISRAEL—AND SOON—A VERY, VERY BLEAK FUTURE AWAITED US. STILL AND ALL, I COULD'VE PICKED A BETTER TIME FOR MEDITATION."

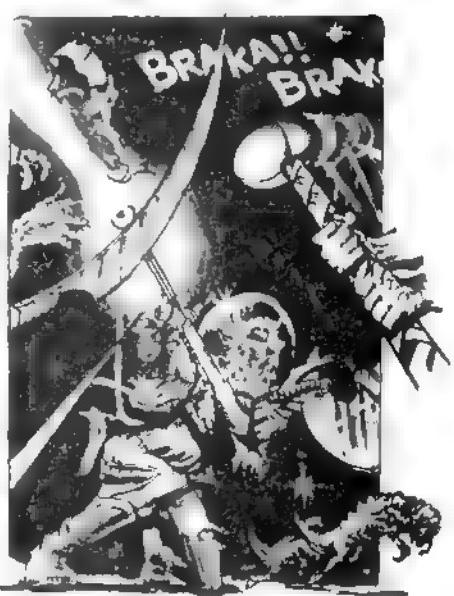
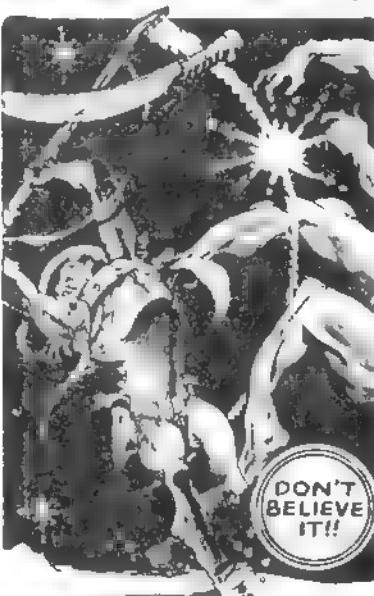
"IF I HAD, I MIGHT HAVE NOTICED THE REEDS. AND IF I HAD, I MIGHT HAVE WISED UP SOONER. AND IF COWS HAD WINGS—THEY'D BE DUCKS! BUT THEY AREN'T. AND I DIDN'T."

"—AND SO MY FATE WAS SEALED."

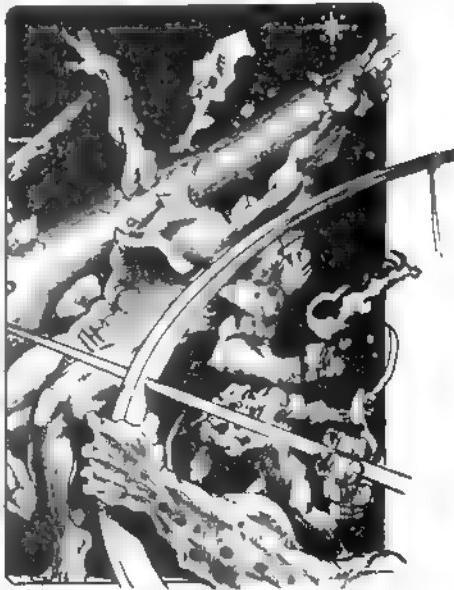
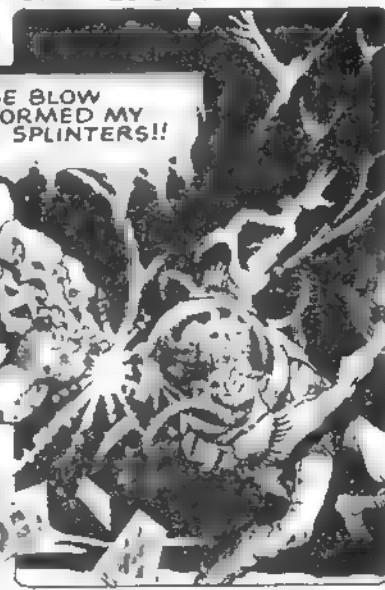


"WHO CAN CONTROL HIS FATE? HERE IS MY JOURNEY'S END." OTHELLO

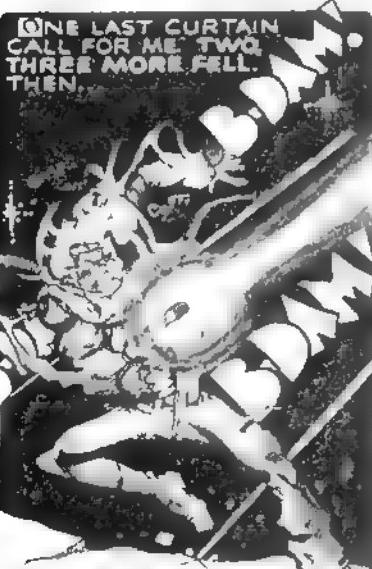
IT WAS ALL OVER, I
KNEW IT-THEY KNEW
"SIGHT" YOU'D THINK BY
THE TIME YOU REACHED
YOUR CENTURY MARK
YOU'D BE A LITTLE
MORE READY TO
GO.



I DIDN'T WANT TO DIE-BUT SO WHAT? THEY HAD ME I FOUGHT BACK HARD
THOUGH, WITH ALL THE CRAZY FURY OF SOMEONE WHO HAS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING
MORE TO LOSE. THREE CROPPED IN QUICK SUCCESSION MORE FOLLOWED UNTIL .



STAGGERING, I CONTINUED TO FIRE. POISONOUS AIR FLOODED THE RUPTURED SUIT,
FILLING MY LUNGS WITH PAIN. COUGHING UNCONTROLLABLY, I REFUSED TO STOP,
EVEN AS A THICK, TERRIBLE BLACKNESS ENGULFED ME. THE PLAY WAS ALMOST OVER.

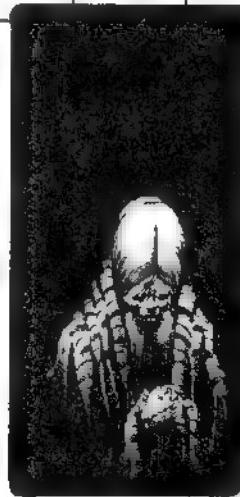
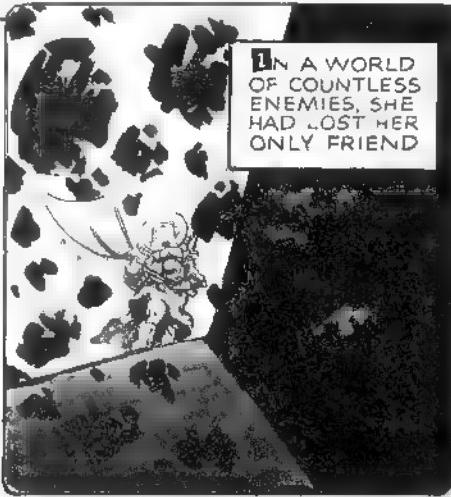


SHE WAS ALONE. SHE WAS ALONE WHEN SHE FOUND WHAT LITTLE REMAINED OF ME—AND BURIED IT. SARAH SAT "SHIVA" IN SILENCE. WHY CRY? WHO WOULD HEAR?

GO LIVE IN FEAR...ALONE FOREVER. WAS THERE EVER A BETTER DEFINITION OF HELL? AH, BUT SARAH WAS STUBBORN. AND TOO, THERE WAS MORE TO CONSIDER THAN JUST HER OWN LIFE.

IN A WORLD OF COUNTLESS ENEMIES, SHE HAD LOST HER ONLY FRIEND

AND SO SHE CARRIED ON ALONE.

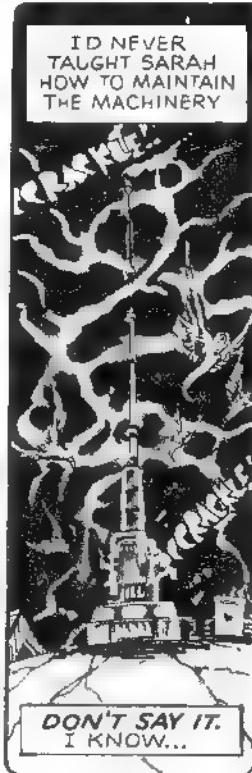
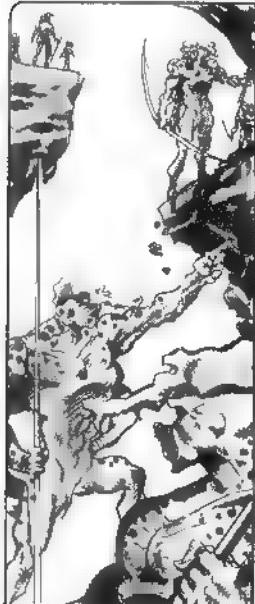


ALONE, DID I SAY? NOT ENTIRELY. I WAS WITH HER. I WAS THERE...AND HERE... AND A MILLION, MILLION OTHER PLACES, TOO. ALL AT THE SAME TIME. HOW CAN THIS BE? TO BE HONEST, I DON'T KNOW, REALLY. ANSWERS YOU WANT, EH? WHEN I WAS YOUNGER, I SEARCHED FOR ANSWERS. WAS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH? IN WHAT FORM? ALSO, I WONDERED ABOUT GOD.



IF THERE IS A GOD, I ASKED, WHY WOULD HE ALLOW WHAT HE ALLOWS? GREED, IGNORANCE—THE MEANNESS OF SPIRIT THAT SEEMED SO PERVERSIVE. AGE OLD QUESTIONS AND WHEN NO ANSWERS CAME I WOULD CONSOLE MYSELF WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT, EVEN IF I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND GOD IN THIS LIFETIME, I WOULD IN THE NEXT. HA! I KNOW NO MORE ABOUT GOD NOW THAN I DID THEN. MAYBE THERE ARE NO ANSWERS OR MAYBE...I JUST WASN'T MEANT TO UNDERSTAND.

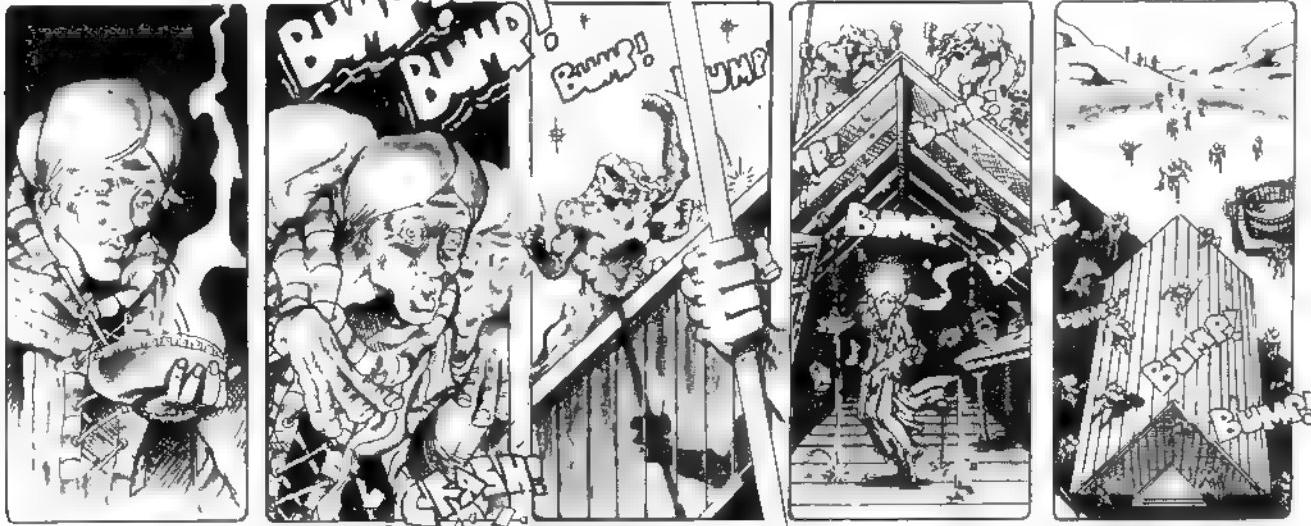
DH, BUT IF THERE WERE MANY THINGS I DIDN'T KNOW—THERE WERE OTHER THINGS I DID. I KNEW, FOR INSTANCE, THAT UP ABOVE



PLANS WERE BEING MADE TO VISIT SARAH. HER NEIGHBORS HAD DISCOVERED A BREAK IN THE FORCESHIELD.

I WATCHED HELPLESSLY AS THEY FINALLY BROKE IN. THINGS WERE FAST TURNING BITTER FOR SARAH. BUT ME? I WAS BEYOND ALL THAT. LISTEN—MY BODY WAS DEAD. I COULDN'T SEE, HEAR, TOUCH—WHAT-EVER, AND YET.. IT DON'T MATTER MY MIND, FREED FROM THE DISTRACTIONS OF THE FIVE SENSES, BEGAN TO MOVE, GROW, EXPLORE.

MY MIND WAS CLEAR, FREE OF THE "LIVING WORLD." ANYTHING WAS POSSIBLE. I COULD BE A ROCK, A TREE—THE AIR ITSELF I COULD MEET OTHER DISEMBODIED INTELLECTS—AND BE THEM MOSES...HITLER...SHAKESPEARE, EVEN! WHOEVER, WHEREVER, WHEREVER. THINK OF IT! TO LIVE A THOUSAND BILLION LIFE-TIMES THROUGH THE MINDS OF OTHERS, AND TO LIKEWISE SHARE YOUR OWN. ALL THE HAPPINESS, THE SORROW, THE LOVE, THE ADVENTURE! ETERNAL GROWTH! THINK OF IT! I HAD EVERYTHING. AND SARAH. HAD nothing



I FELT HER FEAR AND WANTED TO HELP—BUT THAT WAS IMPOSSIBLE. WE WERE OF TWO WORLDS NOW

IT WAS ALL TOO MUCH FOR ME

I TRIED TO CLEAR MY MIND—TO DISTANCE MYSELF—BUT I COULDN'T!

SARAH'S TERROR HAD WELL... "SHORT CIRCUITED" MY MIND. STOPPED ME COLD.

I WAS TRAPPED IN THIS ROTTING CORPSE.



THE BONDS THAT TIED US SO CLOSELY IN LIFE—NOW REFUSED TO SEVER!

I WAS FORCED TO FEEL—WHAT SHE FELT!!

I SHARED HER HORROR & CONFUSION—AS THEY CLOSED IN FOR THE KILL. I WAS THERE INSIDE HER HELPLESS. I WANTED TO STOP IT BUT I COULD DO NOTHING!!



PERHAPS THE MAIN PURPOSE OF LIFE IS TO EXPERIENCE, TO ABSORB EVENTS, SPONGELIKE, WHILE WE LIVE TO BE SHARED BY MANY, AFTER WE DIE, IF SO, SARAH HAD ALREADY DONE HER PART. I KNEW HOW MUCH HELL THEY HAD FORCED ON HER AND STILL THEY REFUSED TO STOP. STILL THEY PUSHED PUSHED.. PUSHED HER RIGHT PAST THE BREAKING POINT!!

AND SOMETHING INSIDE

SNAPPED

MONSTERS!
BUTCHERS!
GET OUT!
GET OUT OF
MY HOUSE!

MURDERERS!
YOU WANT TALL
EVERYTHING!

GUNFIRE REVERBERATED THROUGHOUT THE CABIN! PLATES BOTTLES—ANYTHING—BECAME FLYING WEAPONS IN HER HANDS. THE ATTACKERS ASTONISHED BY THE FURY OF HER ATTACK, FELL BACK.

WHEN SHE WAS KNOCKED DOWN—HER RIFLE SEIZED!

HELPLESS, I LAY THERE

AS SHE GRABBED A SWORD AND STRUCK BACK!

ABE WASN'T ENOUGH?

NOW YOU WANT OUR BABY TOOOWWW!

Y YOU CAN'T mmphh HAVE H M "Cough"

Cough
I WON'T LET YOU cough

THE STATION HAD ITS OWN PECULIAR IRONY. — THERE SHE WAS—WHITE WITH FEAR IN THE FACE OF DEATH, BUT DEATH'S NOTHING TO BE FRIGHTENED OF I KNOW. IT'S PEACEFUL, SHELTERED. SARAH'D LIKE IT

NO, IT'S NOT THE DYING THAT'S SO TERRIBLE.

AH, BUT THERE WAS MORE AT STAKE THERE THAN SARAH'S LIFE. MUCH MORE—AS I SOON DISCOVERED

FOR AT ME I WAS SARAH I WAS OUR CHILD OUR CHILD SO FRAGILE-SO SMALL.
YET HOW OFTEN HAS THE VERY LARGE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE VERY SMALL?

I REMEMBERED

A SHIP ON A JOURNEY...



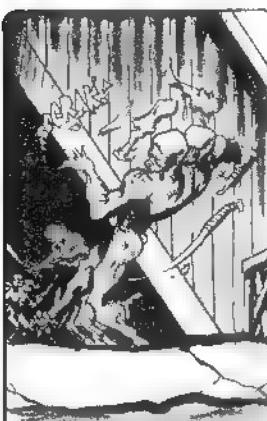
TO A NEW WORLD AN EXPLOSION.
ONE THOUSAND GOOD PEOPLE...GONE.
WHY? SIMPLY BECAUSE A TINY STABILIZING PIN THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN THERE TO PREVENT A TRAGEDY, WASN'T!

OPENED MY SOUL THEN AND LOOKED TO THE FUTURE. I SAW A TIME OF GREAT CRISIS. A DELICATE BALANCE...IN WHICH THE LIFE OR DEATH OF WORLDS WOULD DEPEND ON THE EXISTENCE OF ANOTHER "PIN" A HUMAN PIN. A TINY PIN - TO PREVENT A GREAT TRAGEDY!

TRY IT!

JUST
TRY IT!!

OUR SON WAS DESTINED TO PLAY THAT ROLE. ONLY NOW, WHEN THAT FUTURE TIME ARRIVED HE WOULD NOT BE THERE TO PREVENT THE HORRORS-TO-BE.
HE, AND MY WIFE WOULD BE DEAD.
TIME GREW SHORT. SARAH FOUGHT BRAVELY, BUT NO SINGLE PERSON-NO MATTER HOW COURAGEOUS-COULD DEFEAT AN ARMY. IT WOULD TAKE A MIRACLE.



YES, A MIRACLE!
IN THE PREVIOUS MONTHS, MY MIND HAD SHARPENED-
MY WILL GROWN.
I COULD PERFORM A MIRACLE BUT
WOULD I? ID NO DESIRE TO LIVE AGAIN BUT...

A DECISION HAD TO BE MADE NOW.



THE SAME DECISION SHAKESPEARE ASKED OF HAMLET CENTURIES PAST

THAT IS TO SAY



"TO BE..."



..OR NOT TO BE."



THAT...IS THE
QUESTION!

WHETHER
OR NOT TO
SUFFER...

THE SLINGS
AND ARROWS
OF
OUTRAGEOUS
FORTUNE...

OR TO BEAR
ARMS...

AGAINST
A SEA OF
TROUBLE...

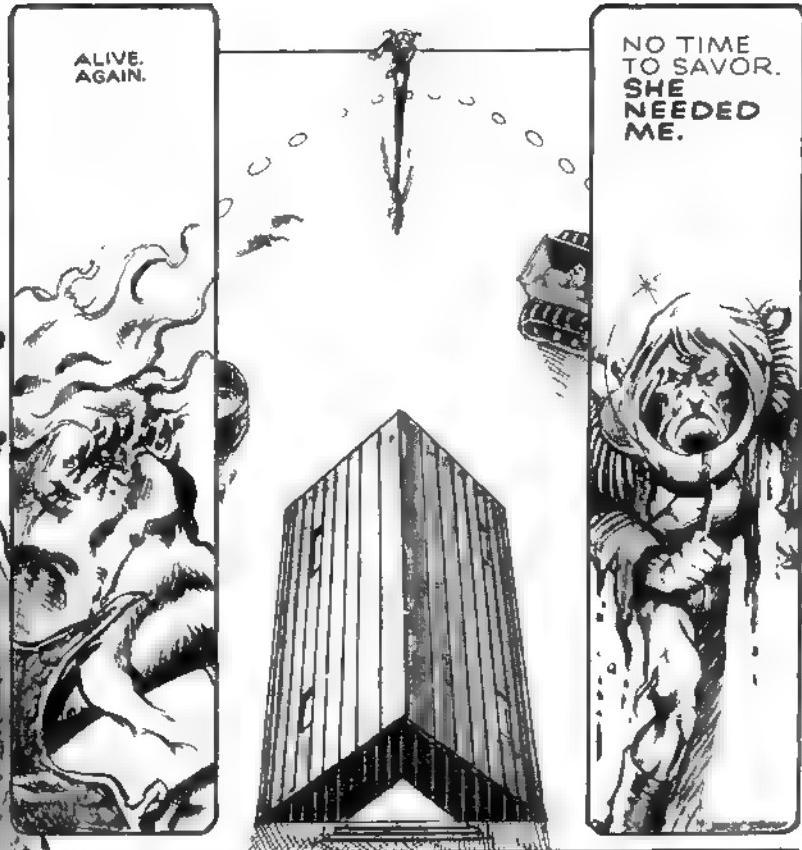
AND...

BY OPPOSING...

END THEM!!

ALIVE.
AGAIN.

NO TIME
TO SAVOR.
SHE
NEEDED
ME.



LIVE AGAIN! MY BODY REBELLED AT THIS INSANE VIOLATION OF NATURE—**BUT I WOULD NOT STOP!** THROUGH SHEER FORCE OF WILL, I PRESSED FORWARD. LIFE SHOULD END IN ITS PROPER TIME. BUT FOR SARAH, IT WAS MUCH TOO SOON. SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY, THERE WAS A WORLD TO BUILD—AND PEOPLE WHO NEED HER KIND OF COURAGE. FOR SARAH TO DIE THIS EARLY—WOULD BE TRAGIC!



ONLY NOW—SARAH'S TIME WAS UP! THE COMPOUND'S OXYGEN SUPPLY HAD ALREADY ESCAPED THROUGH THE RUPTURED FORCE-FIELD. UNABLE TO BREATHE, SARAH HAD FINALLY SUCUMBED TO THE INEVITABLE IN SECONDS. IT WOULD ALL BE OVER. AND I **I KNEW... I COULD NOT REACH HER IN TIME!!!**

A THICK CABIN WALL
SEPARATED ME FROM
SARAH YET I "FELT"
THE POWERFUL GRIP
THAT HELD HER. "HEARD"
THE HISS OF THE BLADE
AS IT BEGAN ITS DOWN-
WARD DESCENT

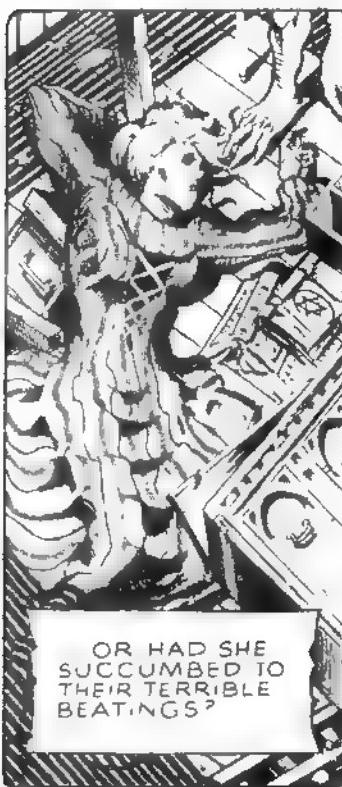
HERE WAS NO
TIME! SARAH WOULD
DIE OUR CHILD WOULD
DIE AND BECAUSE
I WAS TOO LATE, A
CHAIN REACTION
OF STAGGERING
DIMENSIONS WOULD
BEGIN!

YES, I KNEW THE
SITUATION WAS HOPE-
LESS - BUT I HAD TO
SAVE HER!

I HAD
TO TRY!!!



CALL IT LUCK - CALL IT FATE BUT MY UNORTHODOX ENTRANCE
STARTLED THEIR AXEMAN DEFLECTING HIS AIM BY INCHES. THE AXE
MISSED. BUT DID SHE STILL LIVE?



SARAH'S PULSE WAS WEAK - HER BREATHING SHALLOW. I LOST NO
TIME FITTING HER WITH A SPARE OXYGEN MASK.

I GENTLY PLACED SARAH OUTSIDE THE CABIN. CURIOUS, THE CREATURES WATCHED FROM INSIDE, BUT MADE NO MOVE TO STOP ME

MY POOR SARAH

MY POOR,
DEAR SARAH.

I KNEW WHAT HAD TO BE DONE, AND I DREADED IT! DESPITE THE ATROCITIES THESE BEINGS HAD INFILCTED ON SARAH, OUR FRIENDS ON ME, EVEN—I COULDN'T HATE THEM. CULTURALLY AND MORALLY, THEY WERE A DIFFERENT BREED—TOO ALIEN FOR US TO JUDGE, AND I COULDN'T DISREGARD THE FACT THAT WAS WE WHO HAD—HOWEVER UNWILLINGLY—INVADED THEIR SOIL. YES, THEIR STORY HAD A SIDE TO LOOK AT, TOO. BUT NOT NOW! THE STAKES WERE TOO HIGH FOR INDECISION. TOO HIGH, IN FACT, EVEN...

FOR COMPASSION

HERE ARE TIMES WHEN ONE MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN TWO WRONGS AND PRAY THE BEST CHOICE HAS BEEN MADE. VIOLENCE DISGUSTED ME. I HAD SEEN TOO MUCH OF IT WHILE ALIVE, BUT ANY INDECISION ON MY PART NOW—WOULD EVENTUALLY DOOM MILLIONS—BILLIONS PERHAPS—to AN EARLY DEATH. COUNTLESS FEELINGS AND SENSATIONS—FOREVER LOST—NEVER TO BE SHARED AFTER DEATH. THE QUALITY OF "LIFE-AFTER-LIFE" WOULD DIMINISH PERCEPTIBLY.

I ROSE, AND WITH GRIM PURPOSE...ENTERED THE CABIN!

ALONE, NO ONE COULD HOPE TO STAND AGAINST THIS MASS OF DEADLY WARRIORs. BUT IN THIS FINAL BATTLE, I WOULDN'T BE ALONE. I HAD FRIENDS. EVEN AS THE CREATURES PRESSED FORWARD, I FORCED MYSELF TO RELAX. I... OPENED...MY MIND. IMAGES ENGULFED ME—SUFFUSED ME: JUANNA, LAURA, CARLOS... ANNA. TIME/SPACE HELD NO BARRIERS—AS THE LIFE FORCE OF HUNDREDS, THOUSANDS OF THE UNDEAD JOINED WITH MINE. EDGAR, SID, LENORE, SCOTT, HARRIET—I NEEDED THEM—AND THEY CAME. THEIR STRENGTH, THEIR WILL—WAS MINE! POWER: TOO MUCH POWER FOR ONE BODY! BURNING WITH UNBRIDLED ENERGY, I SOUGHT RELEASE!



THEN, AS IF ON CUE, THE CREATURES WERE ON ME—EVERYWHERE! SLASHING, PUNCHING, GOUGING. TRYING TO PULL ME DOWN—CUT ME APART—ANYTHING TO STOP ME, AND THEY COULDN'T! A DARK BILIOUS FURY WELLED UP DEEP FROM WITHIN, AND WITH IT, A VOICE ECHOED SILENTLY FROM THE FAR DISTANT PAST: A WARNING, REALLY, FOR SOME A DEATH KNELL FOR OTHERS!!!

"...COME NOT BETWEEN THE
DRAGON AND ITS WRATH!"

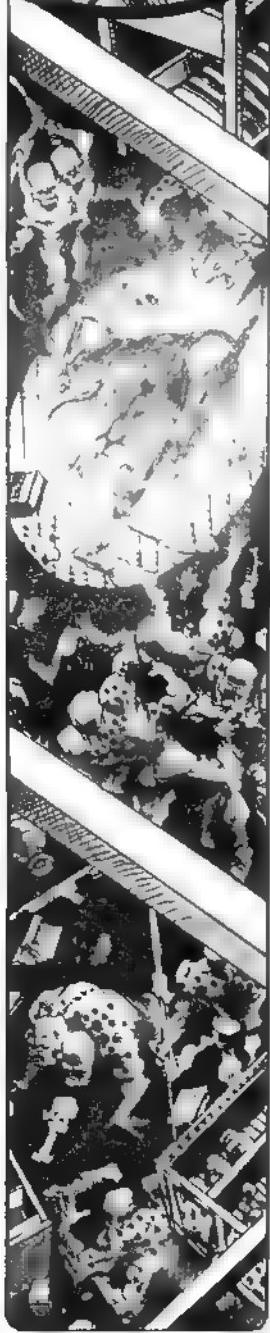




CHIS WAS NO MAN OF FLESH & BLOOD. THEY NOW FACED—BUT A BLUR OF TERROR. A MADDENED GOLEM! UNSTOPPABLE! UNKILLABLE!



CHE COOL DETACHMENT OF DEATH GAVE WAY BEFORE THE VIOLENT FURY OF LIFE. MONTHS WITHOUT FEELINGS HAD LEFT ME ILL-PREPARED FOR THIS INSANE RUSH OF HUMAN EMOTIONS.

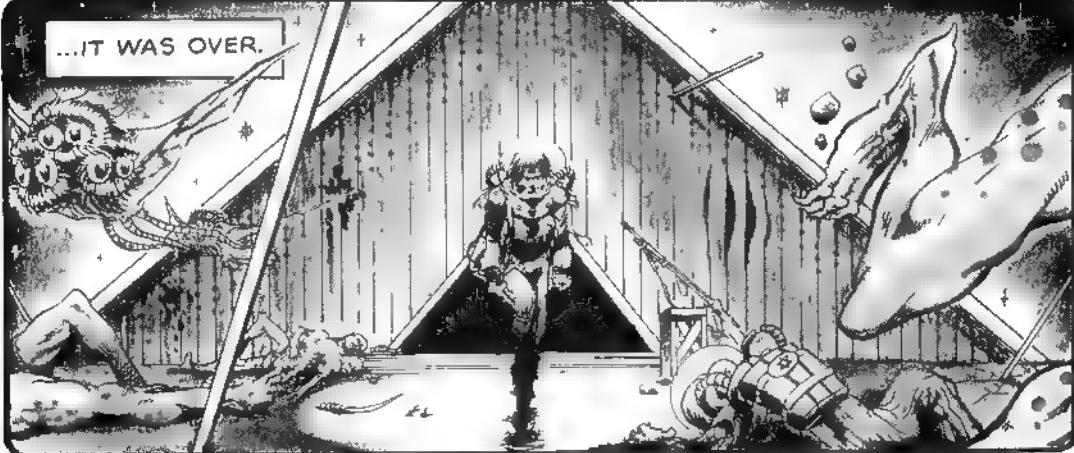


I WAS OUT FOR BLOOD! MY BODY—HARDENED BY CHEMICALS IN THEIR SOIL—DEALT CRUSHING BLOWS. HOUR BY HOUR THEY CAME...IN ENDLESS NUMBERS...ONLY TO CRUMBLE.



CRY AS THEY MIGHT, THEY COULDN'T KILL ME TWICE. ONE BY ONE, I CUT THEM DOWN. THEY FELL, THEY RAN...OR THEY DIED. UNTIL FINALLY...

...IT WAS OVER.

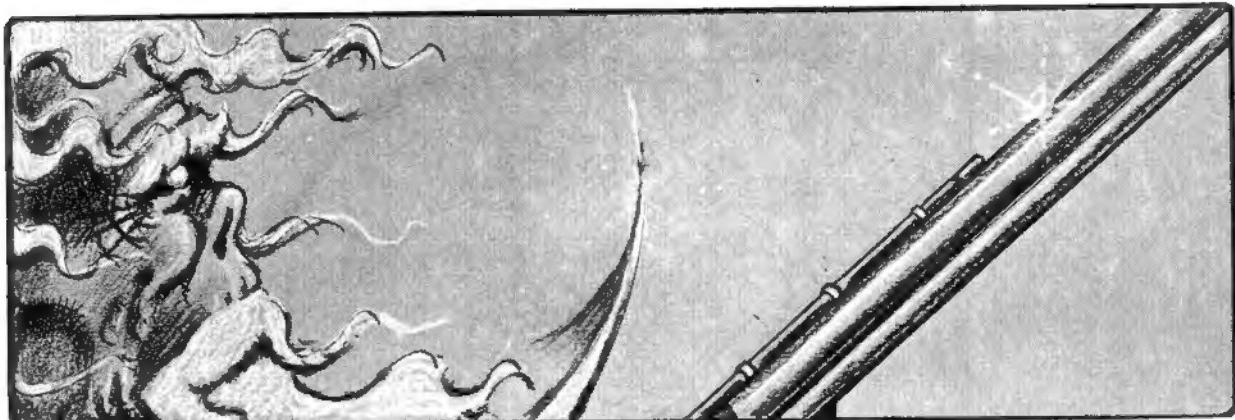


SARAH WAS BEGINNING TO STIR I COULDN'T LET HER SEE ME.. LIKE THIS!





AND THAT, MY FRIEND, IS HOW I FOUND MYSELF SITTING SOMEWHERE (IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE) TELLING YOU MY STORY. OH, DON'T BE SAD—I'M NOT. IT'S PEACEFUL HERE—AND I'M LEARNING NEW THINGS ALL THE TIME. SHARING EXPERIENCES WITH A LOT OF INTERESTING PEOPLE—YOURSELF INCLUDED! HEH! AND YOU KNOW WHAT? EVEN MY TWO-HEADED NEIGHBORS ARE NICE—ONCE YOU GET TO KNOW 'EM! WE SIT AROUND AND SWAP STORIES, SOMETIMES. AND WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT—THEY'RE CRAZY ABOUT SHAKESPEARE! STRANGE WORLD, EH?



"SO" YOU SAY, "THAT'S ALL VERY FINE FOR YOU, MR. ABRAHAM-GINSBERG-THE-CORPSE. ONLY WHAT ABOUT POOR SARAH?" WELL, NOT LONG AFTER THE BIG FIGHT, A RESCUE SHIP TRACKED IN ON SARAH'S TRANSMISSIONS. TOOK HER WITH THEM TO NEW ISRAEL. NEW ISRAEL. MMMM—A HARD, BEAUTIFUL WORLD. AND SARAH'S DONE A LOT FOR IT. SHE WAS JUST LAST YEAR ELECTED TO THE NEW ISRAELI KNESSET—FOR A SECOND TERM YET! MAYBE THE ONLY HONEST POLITICIAN YOU'LL EVER SEE!



DON'T WORRY—JUST A FEW MORE LOOSE ENDS TO TIE UP. EN-ROUTE TO NEW ISRAEL, SARAH HAD OUR BABY. SHE NAMED HIM AFTER MY FATHER, ISAAC. ISAAC ABRAHAM GINSBERG. THE DOCTORS WERE AMAZED! FOR THE CHILD TO BE ALIVE AND HEALTHY—AFTER ALL SARAH HAD BEEN THROUGH—WAS A MIRACLE, THEY SAID. AND THEY DIDN'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT! HIS BIG TEST IS STILL TO COME, THOUGH. AND WHETHER HE'LL BE UP TO IT EVEN I DON'T KNOW. BUT AT LEAST HE....AND A LOT OF OTHER PEOPLE....NOW HAVE A CHANCE.



I DO MISS MY SARAH—BUT WE HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TO FIND EACH OTHER AGAIN. ENDLESS TIME. UNTIL THEN, I'M COMFORTED BY A PARTING GIFT SHE LEFT. A MESSAGE, ACTUALLY—OR, RATHER, A SLIGHT ALTERATION OF THE QUOTATION I WROTE IN THE EARTH. A MESSAGE OF LOVE...AND HOPE. YOU'RE WELCOME TO READ IT IF YOU'D LIKE. I DO. OFTEN.



SF READING LIKE THIS DOESN'T HAPPEN EVERY DAY!

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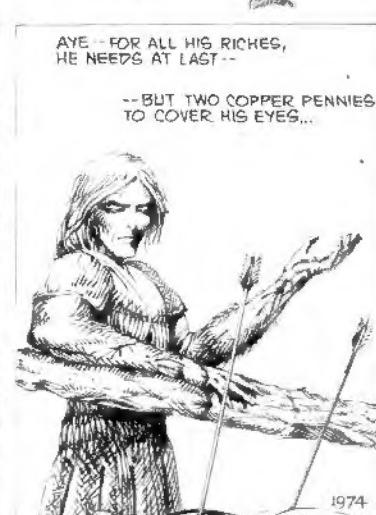
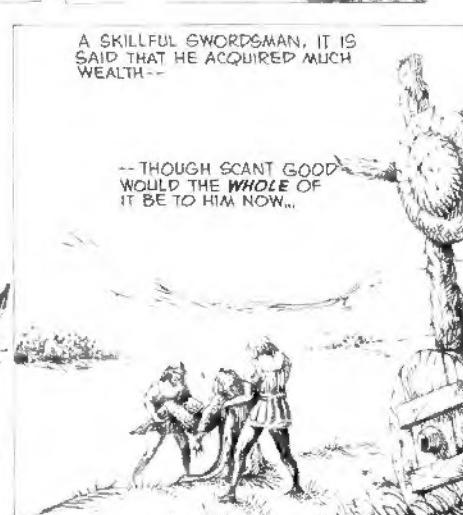
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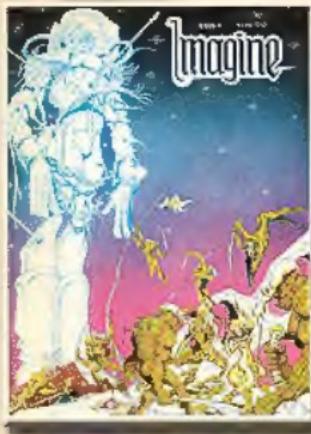
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Imagine #5

Published April 1979

1st Edition

Star*Reach Productions

\$1.25

36 pages

Printrun of 12,600 copies

8 1/8" x 10 7/8"

ISBN:

Artists:

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Comments:

Says "First Printing April 1979" on page 2.